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FOR EAP/ANP AND IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/8/2016

TAGS: PREL UNSC PP

SUBJECT: BRACING PNG ON SUPPORT FOR VENEZUELA

REF: A) STATE 148130 B) STATE 145242 C) PORT MORESBY 370

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Fitts, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy Port  
Moresby, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1.(C) Summary: Chief Secretary Kalinoe took aboard our concerns about Venezuela's candidacy for the UNSC. He allowed that Prime Minister Somare had not consulted any of his staff before or after making his statement in favor of Venezuela (ref C). He will take up the matter with the PM. However, we believe that, once committed, chances are slim Somare will change his mind.  
End Summary.

2.(C) In a Sept 9 meeting, Ambassador braced Chief Secretary Joshua Kalinoe about the Venezuelan candidacy and Prime Minister Somare's announced support. Kalinoe allowed that PNG, having benefited from extensive UN help during its own Bougainville crisis, should be interested in an effective UN peace keeping and mediating mechanism. He also noted that PNG wanted to be seen as a responsible player on the international scene.

3.(C) Kalinoe explained that Somare had made the statement to press at the conclusion of his meeting with an envoy from Hugo Chavez. He had not consulted with his staff before and had issued no directions afterward. He committed to discussing the matter in detail with the PM.

4.(C) Ambassador also raised US concerns over the language in the final NAM document (ref B). Again, PNG might be especially interested in the terrorism language exempting wars of national liberation, since that could easily be applied to situations like PNG experienced in Bougainville. The staff which will accompany Somare to Havana (Kalinoe will only be in the UNGA meetings) took notes.

5.(C) Comment: Kalinoe will discuss the UNSC vote with Somare. Ambassador, who will shortly depart post, called in a few markers to ensure that. He seemed genuinely concerned with the possible consequences of Venezuela on the UNSC. Kalinoe is also Somare's trusted aide and political operative, having just been reappointed for another four-year term. It is possible that Somare merely made the comments off hand while seeing off the Venezuelan envoy. However, while hopeful, we would want to overstate the chances of the prickly PM changing his mind after committing in public. We believe the current assessment of PNG "leaning heavily" to Venezuela remains appropriate.

FITTS